

Special Education Subcommittee Meeting

April 8, 2015 - 10AM – 12:30PM

Conference Line: 888-494-4032

Room Code: 611 304 5703

Ounce of Prevention Fund

Room 1507 (15th Floor)

33 W. Monroe Suite 2400

Chicago, Illinois 60603

Attendees: Jeanette McCollum, Nicole Cato, Karen Berman, Theresa Forthofer, Donna Nylander, Kyrsten Brown, Allison Lowe-Fotos, Denise Jordan, Margie Harkness, Pam Reising Rechner

I. Welcome and Introduction

Karen Berman, Ounce of Prevention Fund, welcomed participants. Participants introduced themselves to the room.

II. Approve minutes from 1/12/15 Meeting

One change was pointed out in the minutes from 1/12/15: Pam Reising Rechner's name was spelled incorrectly. Karen made a note of the change and asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Donna Nylander made a motion to approve and Allison Lowe-Fotos seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Budget Update

Karen Berman gave an update about the state budget as it related to children with disabilities. Recently there have been a number of legislative hearings and testimony. Supplemental funding was given to the Child Care Assistance Program and Early Intervention for FY15, but all agencies are taking a 2.25% cut to their budgets. ISBE has set up a special fund to help school districts that are facing the most dire consequences. Donna Nylander pointed out that the 2.25% is not for the whole year, but rather until June 30th so the cuts are happening now and having a large impact.

IV. Award of Excellence Update

Jeannette McCollum and Donna Nylander gave an update on the Award of Excellence (AoE) for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs. They have been recruiting programs that have a gold rating through ExceleRate and use inclusive practices to be a part of the "support cohort." Once a program joins a cohort they get a variety of supports and training and will eventually get coaching to develop their own portfolios. The sequence of the training is as follows: 1) the cohort completes an online webinar that introduces them to the AoE; 2) administrators get a full-day training on how to use the Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP); 3) program staff complete a webinar to learn how to use the ICP for self-assessment.

The first cohort started out with 9 programs from 11 sites, all of which are PFA sites. Two have decided to hold off until the second cohort so there are now 7 programs and 9 separate sites. Some

of these sites have as many as ten classrooms. This week they are completing a required prerequisite application that checks on their progress on the standards for each of the awards. In early May the programs will submit self-study portfolios and committees will come together to review those. They are finding that there is a range among programs rated gold and some of them need a lot of supports. The Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) is connecting these programs with STAR NET and Early Choices. They expect that this will enhance inclusive practices across the state.

In the future there will be four more cohorts. For the next cohort they are hoping to pull in some child care programs and after that they hope to pull in some Head Start programs. In addition to the cohort track, there is also an independent track that allows programs to read the documentation online and apply. OECD has a brochure about the award that is nearly finished and they will request help from subcommittee members with dissemination of the brochure. Donna Nylander shared two handouts with the group: Standards and Evidence for the AoE for Inclusion and Frequently Asked Questions for the AoE for Inclusion. The award now has a logo and a website, which can be accessed through a link on the Gateways site. OECD will be sharing information about the AoE at two upcoming conferences.

OECD interviewed applicants for the project coordinator position and possible coaches. They were impressed with the applicants and expect to be bringing in some coaches with good experience.

Theresa Forthofer stated that her private child care program is not in ExceleRate and that she is not sure why they have not been through the formal process yet. Child care centers must be evaluated with either ECERS or CLASS score in order to be in ExceleRate, but the Subcommittee members were not aware of who is responsible for conducting this evaluation. Karen Berman agreed to find out.

Nicole Cato asked to be given information about the next cohort for the AoE for Inclusion and Kyrsten Brown and Allison Lowe-Fotos agreed to send information to her when it is available.

Donna Nylander asked the Subcommittee for feedback about the 10-33% range for the percentage of children with disabilities required to be included in a program in order for the program to receive the AoE. Karen Berman asked if there was concern about the ability of programs to reach 10%.

Donna responded that they felt that eventually this standard will be reasonable because it includes IFSPs, IEPs and 504 plans. Theresa Forthofer pointed out that if the eligibility requirements for Early Intervention change from a 30% delay to a 50% delay, many programs may no longer meet the 10% standard. The Awards of Excellence will have to consider what to do if this happens.

Karen Berman asked that the Subcommittee receive regular updates on the progress of the AoE.

Child Find: Developmental Screening

Donna Nylander gave an update about an interest group that was gathered in Joliet to talk about concerns and a vision for screening all children in the state. The goal of the meeting was to learn about the Easter Seals national initiative and how the Innovation Zones are working to provide Child Find.

Theresa Forthofer described Easter Seals' initiative. The national Easter Seals organization has the ASQ tool online available for anyone to use. Recently Easter Seals DuPage collaborated with CCR&Rs to use the screening tool for all DuPage county children in child care centers in order to help them meet their ExceleRate criteria. Donna and Theresa discussed the possibility of extending this pilot project statewide in the future. Theresa believes it may be of interest to the Easter Seals national office and its corporate sponsors. It would be of particular interest if they can show that parental consent to sharing records with pediatricians is not a barrier. They have a small pilot project that has been doing this with success.

Karen Berman suggested that it would be great if the Innovation Zones can do what Easter Seals is doing. She then shared the new guidance on child find from ISBE and raised a concern that even with the guidance, school districts may still struggle because they may not realize that they need to screen 0-3 year olds. She suggested that the Subcommittee should create a visual for the Innovation Zones to show where children are being screened and where there may be gaps. She also suggested that the Subcommittee should take a closer look on what data is being collected and who is collecting it.

The next steps for this area of work are to reach out to stakeholders, including Early Intervention, ISBE, OECD, Easter Seals, and the Innovation Zones.

Pre-K Expansion issues related to children with disabilities

Donna Nylander explained that 26 districts are participating in the expansion grant and an institute was held by OECD and ISBE to give guidance on implementation. The Subcommittee reviewed the section about children with disabilities in the Guide to Determining Eligibility and Selecting Participants form. Karen Berman shared that she spoke to Theresa Hawley, who agreed to allow revisions in the language.

Karen also brought up the new Child Care Development Block Grant and indicated that there is language in it that refers to being inclusive of children with special needs. Each state will need to articulate how they are being inclusive. Karen suggested that people in Illinois with expertise in special education need to be included in the conversation about this and that the Subcommittee should discuss this topic at future meetings. She suggested reaching out to child care providers to find out what barriers to inclusion they are experiencing. Theresa offered to do some research about what Easter Seals programs are doing and try to compile best practices.

Updates on work happening in other places

Allison Lowe-Fotos gave an update about the Violence Prevention Task Force, highlighting that there is an opportunity to discuss Early Intervention and Special Education. Allison will send out the Sandy Hook report that is being referenced in the VPTF. She plans to talk to Ireta Gasner about topics for future legislative hearings.

Next Steps

The Subcommittee agreed that the next meeting should be scheduled far enough in advance to let everyone prepare and arrange their schedules.